



# Tower Hamlets Local History Library & Archives

May-June 2015

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## Opening Times

Tues: 10am-5pm  
Wed: 9am-5pm  
Thu: 9am-8pm  
Fri: closed  
Sat: (1st & 3rd of the month): 9am-5pm  
Sun, Mon: closed

## Contact Us

Send us your enquiry via email, phone or letter at

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Visit our website at

## #50TH: Half a century of Tower Hamlets

In 1965 the London Boroughs as we know them today came into being as a result of the London Government Act. Tower Hamlets was formed of the former Metropolitan Boroughs of Poplar, Stepney and Bethnal Green. Unlike the other new London boroughs, whose names tended to derive from one of the former boroughs which constituted them, the naming of Tower Hamlets was a deliberate historical reference, harking back to the medieval hamlets east of the City which provided militia men to guard the Tower of London.

To commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the contemporary borough we are hosting an exhibition drawn entirely from the collections held here at Tower Hamlets Local History Library & Archives to illustrate the last fifty years of our history. All are welcome to join us here for the launch on **Wednesday 20 May at 5.30pm.**

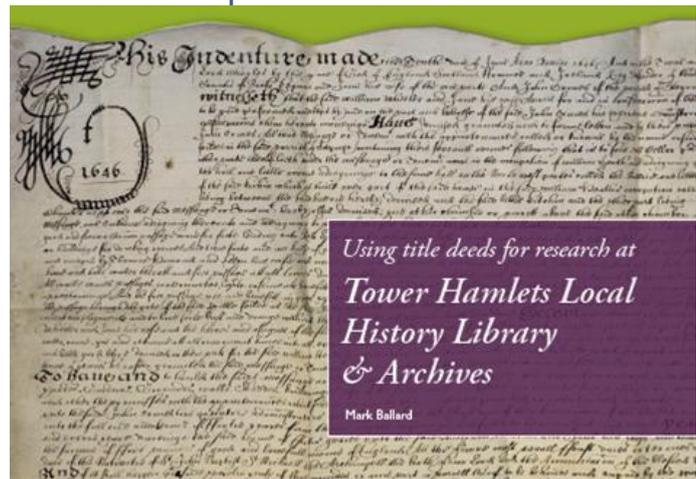
The exhibition will set out the background behind the formation of the new borough in 1965, the ongoing, adaptive usage of its Victorian civic buildings, key moments in local politics and the rapid, large-scale development to which the borough has borne witness over the last half century.

[www.ideastore.co.uk](http://www.ideastore.co.uk)

We have programmed a series of free public events taking place here and around the borough, to tie in with the anniversary. See below for details of these and to book your place.

Tower Hamlets Council will be celebrating the anniversary throughout the summer using social media, so if you're so inclined, use the hashtag **#50TH** and get involved. The last day of the #50TH exhibition here will be Thursday 6 August.

## New booklet published



We have produced a new booklet aimed at researchers interested in deepening their skills and experience in archival research. The 16 page illustrated booklet is a user guide to title deeds held as part of our collection, which extend to over 8000 in number and date from the 17th century. While typically used to research the history of land use and transfer, title deeds contain many personal names as well as dates and details of the property transactions they record. They go back further than censuses or electoral registers and are a unique source of information useful to many researchers, from family historians to geographers and economic historians.

The guide aims to help you to interpret title deeds which can be hard to read or understand. It is now available as a free pdf on our website, or in hard copy from the library. The guide was funded by Heritage Lottery Fund as part of the Land and Lives project and can be found on our website [here](#).

## Touring exhibitions

Two local history exhibitions produced by us are currently on tour in Tower Hamlets.

The **Land and Lives in Bromley-by-Bow** pop-up exhibition is currently on display on the first floor here at the archives until Tuesday 28 April whereupon it will move to Idea Store Chrisp Street for the month of May. As with the

related user guide mentioned above, the Land and Lives exhibition illustrates how such title deeds can be used to study the local history of an area and the individuals who lived there, from the medieval period up to the 20th century, using Bromley-by-Bow as an example.

The **Out of the Box** exhibition continues its tour of Idea Stores and it will be on display at Idea Store Canary Wharf and Idea Store Chrisp Street during May and June. The full tour schedule can be found on our website [here](#).

The Out of the Box project has given disabled people from across the East End the chance to be creatively inspired by the extensive collections that are housed in Tower Hamlets Local History Library and Archives. Their inspiration, thoughts and findings from in-depth research are captured in their own artwork: from sculptures and hand-made cushions, to drawings and poems, all of which are on display as part of the exhibition.

## Upcoming THLHLA events

**Talk: David Rosenberg**  
**Tower Hamlets Local History Library and Archives**  
**Thursday 30 April, 6.30-7.30pm**

Join educator, tour guide and author of *Battle for the East End*, David Rosenberg, who will talk about his new book *Rebel Footprints*. *Rebel Footprints* brings to life the history of social movements in London, from the early nineteenth to the mid-twentieth century. From suffragettes to socialists and chartists to trade unionists, the book invites the reader to step into the footprints of a diverse cast of dedicated fighters for social justice. Free. No booking required.

**History Hoppers**  
**Tower Hamlets Local History Library and Archives**  
**Wednesdays 13 May and 10 June, 2.30-4.30pm**

Do you have a passion for old pictures? Fond memories of forgotten streets? Are you curious about archive collections? Our monthly History Hoppers group offers you and your friends the chance to explore and discuss original historical library and archive sources that help to tell the story of your local area in Tower Hamlets. Refreshments provided. Free. No booking required.

**Prime Time: Land and Lives**  
**Idea Store Chrisp Street**  
**Thursday 14 May, 10am -12pm**

You are invited to join Idea Store Chrisp Street's regular Prime Time group for the over 50s, who will join our Heritage Officer for Learning & Participation Perdita Jones to explore a selection of documents related to the Land and Lives exhibition and discuss how they can be used as a source of material for exploring our past. Free. No booking required.

**Archive talk: The legacy of Lax and the records of**

**Poplar Methodist Church  
Latimer Church Hall, Ernest Street, Stepney, E1  
Thursday 21 May, 7.30pm**

Our Heritage Officer for Archives, Natasha Luck, will be giving a talk to the East London History Society on the legacy of Reverend William Henry Lax (1868-1937), Minister of Poplar Methodist Church on East India Dock Road, and will also discuss the records of the church itself, publicly available at Tower Hamlets Local History Library and Archives. Free. No booking required. For more info, visit their [website](#).

## #50th events

As part of the council's 50th anniversary celebrations and to tie in with our exhibition on this theme, we have brought together a fascinating public programme of walks, tours and talks across the borough, all free of charge.

**From Cable Street to Brick Lane: A Film by Hazuan Hashim & Phil Maxwell  
Idea Store Watney Market  
Thursday 7 May, 6.30-8.30pm**

From Cable Street to Brick Lane is a documentary that explores how different communities came together to fight racism and intolerance in the 1930s, 1970s and 1990s. The film focuses on the infamous Battle of Cable Street in 1936, when the East End's Jewish population united with trade unionists and other groups to prevent Oswald Mosley's Black Shirts from marching through their community. The film also focuses on the predominantly Muslim Bangladeshi community living in and around Brick Lane during the 1970s, who were subjected to similar racist attacks by organised fascist groups. Free. No booking required.

**Who Shot the Sheriff? A documentary by Alan Miles  
Idea Store Watney Market  
Thursday 14 May, 6.30-8.30pm**

Who Shot the Sheriff? tells the story of the Rock Against Racism (RAR) movement of the 1970s. During these days, music played a key part in mobilising opposition to racism and the National Front, and the film artfully draws parallels with the more recent anti-BNP campaigns. The film includes interviews with some of the artists and activists involved, in addition to rare archive footage from the punk and RAR era. Free. No booking required.

**My Art and Tower Hamlets: An Evening with Dan Jones  
Idea Store Watney Market  
Tuesday 19 May, 6.30-8.30pm**

Join us for a Q&A session with Dan Jones, who for over forty years as a local resident, youth worker and activist, has captured life in the East End through his art. Dan Jones' paintings feature local scenes, including the bustling Watney Market and Shadwell Basin, in addition to political demonstrations from East End history, such as the Poplar Rates Dispute and the Battle of Cable Street. Free. No

booking required.

**Film: Twenty Years On - How we Defeated Beackon  
Idea Store Watney Market  
Thursday 21 May, 6.30-8.30pm**

An inspirational film which tells the story of how a local community organised a successful campaign to defeat the British National Party. Highlights the events on the Isle of Dogs, after the election of Derek Beackon, the country's first BNP councillor, in 1993. Free. No booking required.

**Dan Jones Family Workshop  
Idea Store Watney Market  
Thursday 28 May, 2pm-3.30pm**

Join us for a fun family workshop with artist Dan Jones. Using drawing and printmaking, we will recreate our favourite parts of the borough. Suitable for all ages.

**Tour of the former Bethnal Green Town Hall  
Town Hall Hotel, Patriot Square, London E2 9NF  
Monday 1 June, 11am-12pm**

Join our Heritage Officer Natasha Luck who has organised a series of guided tours of former civic buildings. We kick off with the Town Hall Hotel, which has made imaginative use of the grand building from which the old Metropolitan Borough of Bethnal Green was governed before 1965. The tour will be led by the hotel's General Manager, Marie Baxter. Free. To book, email: [localhistory@towerhamlets.gov.uk](mailto:localhistory@towerhamlets.gov.uk) or telephone: 020 7364 1290.

**Tour of the former Vestry Hall of Mile End Old Town  
Tower Hamlets Local History Library & Archives  
Monday 1 June, 2-3pm**

Join us for a tour of the former Vestry Hall of the Hamlet of Mile End Old Town, led by Natasha Luck, Heritage Officer. The building has been the home of Tower Hamlets Local History Library & Archives since 1965. Free. To book, email: [localhistory@towerhamlets.gov.uk](mailto:localhistory@towerhamlets.gov.uk) or telephone: 020 7364 1290.

**Archive talks: The history of local government  
Tower Hamlets Local History Library & Archives  
Thursday 11 June, 6-7.30pm**

We are pleased to host two talks, one from David Luck, Senior Archivist at the London Metropolitan Archives on the rise and fall of the London County Council (LCC), and the other by Malcolm Barr-Hamilton, Tower Hamlets Borough Archivist, on the archival legacy of local government in Tower Hamlets from the seventeenth to the twenty-first centuries. Free. Booking required: email: [localhistory@towerhamlets.gov.uk](mailto:localhistory@towerhamlets.gov.uk) or telephone: 020 7364 1290.

**Film: Fly a Flag for Poplar  
Idea Store Chrisp Street  
Sunday 21 June, 2.15-3.45pm**

This film about Poplar in the 1970s was made by local

residents and features collections from our collections. It illustrates the day-to-day lives of Poplar's residents in the context of the area's rich history, including the emergence of the labour movement and the Poplar Rates Dispute. Free. No booking required.

**Poplar's Town Halls guided walk**  
**Meet at Poplar DLR station**  
**Tuesday 23 June, 7pm**

Join Malcolm Barr-Hamilton, Borough Archivist at Tower Hamlets Local History Library & Archives, on a guided walk around sites in Poplar and Bow relating to former Poplar civic buildings. Transport between Poplar and Bow will be by DLR at participants' own expense. Free. Booking required: email: [localhistory@towerhamlets.gov.uk](mailto:localhistory@towerhamlets.gov.uk) or Telephone: 020 7364 1290.

**Tour of the former Limehouse District Board of Works**  
**Half Moon Theatre, 43 White Horse Road, E1 0ND**  
**Saturday 4 July, 12-1pm**

A rare chance to tour the former Limehouse District Board of Works building on White Horse Road, which was constructed between 1862-4. The building has been home to the Half Moon Young People's Theatre since 1994. Free. Booking required: email: [localhistory@towerhamlets.gov.uk](mailto:localhistory@towerhamlets.gov.uk) or telephone: 020 7364 1290.

**Tour of the former Limehouse Town Hall**  
**Commercial Road, London E14 7HA**  
**Saturday 4 July, 2.30-3.30pm**

A chance to tour the Grade II Listed former Limehouse Town Hall on Commercial Road. Designed by A&C Harston in 1879, the building has seen a variety of other uses in its long history, including as the home of the National Museum of Labour History. It is currently in the process of being renovated for use as a community, enterprise and heritage space. Free. Booking required: email: [localhistory@towerhamlets.gov.uk](mailto:localhistory@towerhamlets.gov.uk) or telephone: 020 7364 1290

## Recent events

The final weeks of our current exhibition **Radiant Affinities: Artworks by Cornelius McCarthy** are upon us - it will be on view until doors close on Thursday 7 May. Please check our opening times before visiting.



A Platonic dialogue reading at the Radiant Affinities book launch

Saturday 18 April saw the book launch for *Radiant Affinities* by Peter Dobson, curator of the current exhibition. Both the book and the exhibition celebrate the work of the gay artist and former Stepney resident, Cornelius McCarthy, who at one time worked at Bancroft Library and whose work takes inspiration from many sources including the docks and the borough's Hawksmoor churches. The launch was a huge success with around fifty people giving up a sunny Saturday to attend. The event featured a Platonic dialogue, with our own Borough Archivist as Socrates, as well as members of the London Lesbian and Gay Switchboard volunteering. Peter Dobson's book can be purchased from the library as well as from Gay's the Word bookshop.

Tower Hamlets Local History Library and Archives was pleased to host visit from a small group of Year 7, 8 and 9 students from **Wapping High School**. The students were interested in the history their local area and were keen to learn more about Bengali and Jewish immigration. They enjoyed listening to some of our oral history recordings, looking through old photographs, including those showing Watney Market and Commercial Road, and viewing our historic maps.

## Cataloguing Update

**Records of JJ and SW Chalk, Timber Merchants and Importers, Limehouse and Whitechapel (reference: B/CHA)**



Chalk premises, Riga Yard, Whitechapel, c.1900. [B/CHA/1/8/1]

We are very pleased to report that the cataloguing of this large and significant business archive is now complete and the records are accessible in our reading room.

The records relate to the firm of JJ and SW Chalk, timber merchants and importers and the family members involved with running the business. The firm, based in Limehouse and Whitechapel, was active for much of the 19th and 20th centuries.

The archive consists of 17 boxes, 19 large volumes and 2 plans and includes financial and accounting, administrative, employee, property and premises and personal records, in addition to some awards.

**Best Days of Our Lives oral history project records (O/BDL)**



Best Days of Our Lives leaflet

Best Days of Our Lives was a multi-cultural East London heritage project run by Raise Up and supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund, undertaken in 2014. The project offered participants (from various communities living in East London) fun opportunities to explore and share their childhood memories, and aimed to identify, record and engage with the games, puzzles, toys, rhymes, songs, literature, and clothing between 1950 to 1990.

Thanks to assistance from Neal Riley, a history student from the University of East London (who undertook a placement with us in February), and regular THLHLA volunteer, Amanda Williams, cataloguing of the records we have taken in from this project is now complete. The material consists of seven oral history interview recordings and accompanying transcripts/summaries completed by volunteers who took part in the project. The recordings and related material are accessible to visitors in our reading room.

## New Collections



11

I. PARTICULARS OF ADMISSION.

II. PARTI

NUMBER.	DATE.			NAME.	BIRTH.			PARENT OR GUARDIAN.		FORMER SCHOOL.	
	Admission	Day	Month		Year	Day	Month	Year	Names and Residences.	NAME.	Year
326	27	11	80	Selley Samuel	26	6	89	76 Portlaw St.	Christ Church		
327	12	10	80	London William	2	9	92	76 Whitstone St.	St Mark's Bolton		
328	"	"	"	Reed Mary	19	3	87	57 Pennsylvania St.	Bayland St.		
329	"	"	"	Thomas Leah	16	3	91 1/2	578 Commercial St.	St Mary's J.M.C.		
330	7	1	01	Hills George	19	5	88	"	St Thomas		
331	7	1	01	Hills Winifred	1	2	92	"	"		
332	"	"	"	Cannock Arthur	7	2	93	37 Abchurch Lane	St Thomas		
333	"	"	"	Arnold Harry	1	1	91	578 Commercial St.	St John's		
334	"	"	"	Schneider Robert	16	11	90	93 Whitstone St.	St John's		
335	"	"	"	Griffiths Alfred	11	11	92	49 Cannon St.	St John's		
336	"	"	"	Martin Herbert	27	1	91	7 Gt. St. Bp. St.	St John's		
337	"	"	"	Ryall Amy	7	11	88	St. John's Rd. Rd.	St. John's		
338	"	"	"	Ryall Ruby	11	1	90	"	"		
339	8	1	01	Schneider Rachel	18	4	91	93 Whitstone St.	St John's		
340	"	"	"	Downing James	6	5	89	2 St. Mary's Lane	St John's		
341	14	1	01	Bullman Winifred	2	7	92	18 Commercial St.	St John's		
342	"	"	"	Suggs Richard	3	6	93	Commercial St.	St John's		
343	"	"	"	Thornhill Mary	4	11	90	37 Cannon St.	St John's		
344	21	1	01	Allen Rose	16	11	90	10 York St.	St John's		
345	"	"	"	Allen Donald	19	6	93	10 York St.	St John's		
346	22	1	01	James Fred Jean	17	11	92	67 Cannon St.	St John's		
347	23	1	01	Sippy Julius	19	10	93	26 Broad St.	St John's		
348	5	2	01	Miller Annie	9	11	89 1/2	522 Commercial St.	St John's		
349	6	2	01	Holland Elizabeth	6	10	89	52 Whitstone St.	St John's		
350	11	2	01	Arnold Herbert	22	8	87	536 Commercial St.	St John's		
351	"	"	"	Schneider Solomon	15	11	92	93 Whitstone St.	St John's		
352	12	2	01	Taylor Winifred	11	10	86	245 Mich. Rd. Rd.	St John's		
353	18	2	01	Budd Ernest	16	2	88	18 Ross Lane	St John's		
354	16	3	01	Alpress Annie	1	10	91	20 Mason St.	St John's		
355	11	3	01	Russell Kate Lili	3	11	93	59 Whitstone St.	St John's		
356	"	"	"	Page Alfred S. Es.	16	3	92	135 Whitstone St.	St John's		
357	"	"	"	Schilman Isaac	7	1	92	520 Commercial St.	St John's		
358	"	"	"	Stuhldreer Violet	29	6	89	147 Whitstone St.	St John's		
359	12	3	01	Webb Elix	27	11	91	242 York St.	St John's		
360	25	3	01	Sayers Wm	15	11	91	Mrs. Blow 7 Cayley St.	St Thomas		
361	25	3	01	Gary Ellen	24	9	91	14 Conder St.	Cayley St.		

Extract from Hamlet of Radcliff School admission register, 1900

As part of a regional project co-ordinated by London Metropolitan Archives, about twenty school admission registers from our collections (dating from 1824-1913) have been digitised and made available online via Findmypast.com. Arrangements are in hand to make Findmypast available on the public PCs in our Reading Room alongside Ancestry.

## Land and Lives



Project Archivist Mark Ballard with the exhibition

It is with regret that we report that the Heritage Lottery Funded Land and Lives project has now formally ended. The pop-up exhibition launched last month about the history of Bromley-by-Bow has received great feedback and will continue on its tour of Idea Stores and other local venues throughout the year. A guide to research using the deeds collection has also been produced, downloadable from the Idea Store website (see above) or you can pick up a hardcopy here in person. This is a must-read for all researchers in any aspect of local or family history in Tower Hamlets who wish to deepen their skills in archival research.

We are happy that Mark Ballard, Project Archivist will remain with us for a few months yet, and we hope the volunteers who have put in such an incredible amount of work into digitising the card index will stay on to continue their work while we seek funding to continue the recataloguing of the remainder of the deeds collection.

## Staff News

Please join us in welcoming the newest member of the team Kieran Duggan. Kieran will be working with us on Wednesdays for the next year as part of a new internship scheme organised by Tower Project and Idea Store. One of Kieran's main tasks will be repackaging the photograph collection in inert, acid-free polyester, to help protect it and preserve it for future use. Kieran is interested in local history and he is keen to start researching his own family history.



Kieran Duggan

Anna Haward, Heritage Officer (Learning & Participation) has taken six months study leave to complete her dissertation for the MA in Archives & Records Management which she has been working on part-time at UCL for the last few years. Perdita Jones is acting into her role until late September, and Mark Ballard is covering Perdita's usual role of Heritage Assistant for the same period.

Muhammad Hasan, a History student at the University of Westminster who lives in Poplar, has spent a day a week with us over the last four months gaining first hand knowledge of what it is like to work in the heritage sector. Muhammad has helped us with a large variety of tasks from digitising photographs, repackaging old deeds, to sorting out our newspaper collection, giving hands-on experience of the sources from which history is constructed. We will miss his dry sense of humour. Muhammad writes, "I have learnt a lot about my home borough, whilst gaining valuable lessons and knowledge from the tasks that were set, and from observing the team, which will pay dividends in later life".



Muhammad Hasan, pictured off-duty

## Picture of the month

**Celebrating 50 Years of Tower Hamlets Local History Library & Archives, 1965-2015**



The reading room, 15 June 1976. [P28653]

Look out for a new online exhibition about the history of THLHLA and the historic building which has been our home since our service was established in 1965. Coming soon!